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OBJECTS AND PROGRESS

OF THE

STATISTICAL SOCIETY.

THE Statistical Society of London was founded on the 15th of March, 1834, in pursuance of a recommendation of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, for the purpose of collecting, arranging, and publishing facts calculated to illustrate the condition and prospects of society, and especially facts which can be stated numerically and arranged in tables. The collection of new statistical materials, it was contemplated, would form only one part of the Society's labours; the condensation, arrangement, and publication of those already existing, whether unpublished, or published only in an expensive or diffuse form, or in foreign languages, being a work of equal usefulness. It was also a prominent object of the Society to form a complete Statistical Library as rapidly as its funds would permit.

Such was the purport of the original prospectus; and now that the Society is in the *twenty-second* year of a prosperous existence, its Fellows have every reason to revert with satisfaction to this outline of its objects; for it is very seldom that the first designs of a public association for the advancement of science are all carried out with so much success as has attended upon those which that prospectus describes. The resources of the Society were, in the first instance, chiefly devoted, under the direction of its Committee, to the collection of new statistical information, and to this great purpose a part of its funds is still appropriated. Its monthly meetings have cultivated among its Fellows an active spirit of investigation, and brought out the valuable results of much individual labour. Its journal has fulfilled the purpose of condensation and publication; and the valuable books and papers which have already been collected form a library of facts of no mean utility.

The Sixth Annual Report of the Society, which contains an elaborate description of the scope and system of its labours, divides Statistics into the following chief sections:—

I. The *Statistics of Physical Geography, Division, and Appropriation*; or, geographical and proprietary Statistics.

II. The *Statistics of Production*; or, agricultural, mining, fishery, manufacturing, and commercial Statistics.

III. The *Statistics of Instruction*; or, ecclesiastical, scientific, literary, university, and school Statistics.

IV. The *Statistics of Protection*; or, constitutional, judicial, legal, military, and criminal Statistics.

V. The *Statistics of Life, Consumption, and Enjoyment*; or, of population, health, the distribution and consumption of the commodities of life, and public and private charity.

All the departments of Statistics above described may be cultivated to the development of as many branches of moral science, and to the attainment of that true insight into the actual condition of Society, without which the application of remedial measures is purely empirical.

Under this conviction, the original prospectus announced the intention of the Society carefully to exclude all "opinions" from its publications; not, assuredly, with the view of discouraging the proper use of hypothetical reasoning, but for the purpose of devoting the pages of its transactions to facts, and not to systems. In the pursuit of almost every investigation, the inquirer will adopt some hypothesis; but its truth and completeness, or its fallaciousness and insufficiency, must be demonstrated by observation and experiment. It is therefore the main purpose of scientific associations to call forth and register the results obtained by these processes; and observation in the wide field of human interest supplies those "facts calculated to illustrate the condition and prospects of society," which it is the design of the Statistical Society to "collect, arrange, and publish."

The pursuit of Statistical inquiries has already made such progress, not in England alone, but throughout Europe, as henceforth to be a necessity of the age, and one of its most honourable characteristics. Thus, errors as to the actual condition and prospects of society are daily exploded, and more just data are supplied to guide the exertions of the philanthropist, the judgment of the legislator, and the speculations of the reasoner. The labours of the Statist, indeed, can alone assure us that we are really advancing in that knowledge of human interests in the aggregate to which it is no longer possible to deny the name of Science.

The Statistical Society of London consists of an unlimited number of Fellows, admitted by ballot, without any entrance fee, but paying a subscription of two guineas per annum; of foreign Honorary Members; and of Honorary Corresponding Members, resident out of the United Kingdom; and it carefully cultivates a connexion with the several local societies of the Empire, and a correspondence with those of Foreign Countries. Fellows elected in or after the month of June are exempt from paying their subscription for the current year. The Journal of the Society, published quarterly, is distributed gratuitously to all the Fellows; its library is one of circulation; and its Rooms and its Monthly Meetings are of great resort.